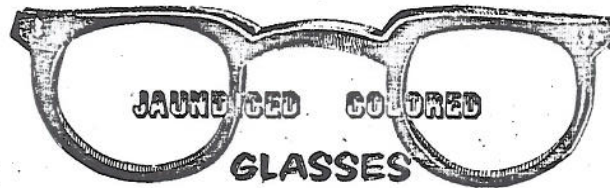


By J. David Truby



Franchising Gerry Ford

What McDonalds did to hamburgers and the Waterbuggers to political science, Trowbridge Velasco is doing by franchising Gerald Ford. Red-eyed liberals cluck over the launching of a Ford franchise in a political climate as solid as a bowl of mom's warm jello.

Yet, true believer Velasco dusts his St. Christopher's Statue and snorts, "Holy kneejerk, even God is franchising—they got shops all over this great land of ours with His logo on the roof—you know, a cross? If you believe in Him, how can this Ford thing go wrong?"

Franchising is where a celebrity sells the rights to his name and image to some local individual—all over the world. The hometown operator operates the business locally using the Big Name and shares the take with the franchiser.

Franchising brought the world Dairy Queen, Roy Rogers sandwiches, Col. Sanders, Arthur Treacher, et. al.

"Ford's coattails are longer and cleaner than Nixon's, he'll sell out overnight," Velasco shrilled. "Can you imagine our great nation, full of grassroot Fords bringing home the bacon for local losers? Whoopie, this brings back nostalgic memories of Edgar Bergen and Mortimer Snerd," he chortled.

Asked about the possibility of franchising the President himself, who's been abroad job hunting recently, Mr. Velasco noted with awe, "It's my understanding a sincere cartel of dedicated American executives from Lockheed, ITT, the diarymen, Hughes Tool, and Billy Graham, Ltd., are thanking Mr. Nixon for his service to their business by franchising a flood of Edsel dealerships under his name."

While Velasco talked, he busily stuffed off-green political dollars and CIA pesos into a sack, saying, "This sack is made from a replica U.S. flag which flew over the Saigon Embassy for a full 15 seconds!"

Getting back to his client, he added proudly, "And, Gerry's got all the right strings attached to be pulled, too."

The Ford franchise involves a mechanical puppet made in Hong Kong, Mich. According to Velasco, the puppets look and sound like the obvious thing—a Gerald Ford. The more expensive the puppet, the closer it resembles the real thing and less a normal person.

The franchisee also gets a set of programmed tape cassettes for his Ford puppet, each bearing a spirited message sprinkled with those stupid, yet folksy-seeking malapropistic mis-sles that have made Gerald Ford someone dimwits can look up to, slightly.

In addition to the tapes, local franchisees get several large banners to hang outside their own Ford Hutch. Mr. Velasco grows serious, "We've dumped Spiro's Fat Jap stuff and Dickie's outdated Love It or Leave It, in favor of our new slogans." He unrolled the handscrawled flags:

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Where There's A War, There's A Way
Leak On The Washington POST**

Mr. Velasco also demonstrated other accessories, including the Ford hotdog (all fat and no meat); the Ford lightbulb (all heat and no light); the Ford automobile turn signal (works only on right turns); a package of trial balloons (filled with certified hot air); plus several gross of red herrings left

over from Ford's role playing in the Warren Commission production.

As with the real product, 98 percent of the Ford franchise items have been certified as out of order by an independent consumer service known collectively as the U. S. Public. Mr. Velasco quickly points out, "These cowardly attacks by pessimists surely darken the woodpile Gerry Ford has worked so hard to build during his political career."

However, as Lyndon Johnson really did say about Gerald Ford, now just a conviction away from the Presidency, "What can you say about this man who's so dumb he can't find his own posterior with both hands?"

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